

REPORT

OF THE

POSTMASTER GENERAL,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

The compensation to Deputy Postmasters;

Presented in obedience to a Resolution of the House of Representatives, of the last Session.

JANUARY 27, 1824.

Read, and ordered to lie upon the table.

WASHINGTON:

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1824.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,

24th January, 1824.

SIR: In obedience to a resolution of the House of Representatives of the United States, at their last Session, which "directed the Postmaster General to report, at an early period of the next session of Congress, what further measures are necessary to provide for a more equitable compensation to Deputy Postmasters, according to the duties and services rendered by them," I have the honor to report, that the present mode of compensating Deputy Postmasters, by giving them a graduated per cent. upon moneys received by them, is believed to be, in most cases, the most equitable that can be adopted. So far as this compensation extends, it is generally proportioned to the labor required, and the responsibility incurred.

Deputy Postmasters, with a few exceptions, receive less for their services than any other officers of the General Government. But, as competent persons to discharge the duties of Postmasters, have been found willing to serve, in every part of the country, and as the present embarrassment of this department requires the utmost economy, in its expenditures, it is believed, that the public interest would not, at this time, be promoted, by a general increase of their compensation. A small addition of pay to each postmaster would afford but little benefit to the individual, whilst it would take from the receipts of the department an amount so considerable, as to render an appropriation from the Treasury indispensable. There are, however, some post offices, where the labor is great, and the perquisites so small, that, unless some additional compensation be given, it is feared competent persons cannot long be found to discharge the duties.

I have endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to fix upon some rule, which would give additional compensation, where it seems to be indispensable, without extending the provision so far as to render the amount objectionable. It is believed, that no provision can be made, embracing a class of cases, so as to give an increase of pay, in the just proportion which the services require.

There are several hundred offices, at which packages are distributed, for which no additional compensation is given. In some cases, this duty is very laborious, whilst the perquisites of the offices are very small. An increased per cent. upon the moneys received by each, would not graduate the pay in proportion to the service required, as, at some offices which receive not more than one hundred and fifty dollars, this service is as laborious as at others where more than a thousand dollars are received. If, in such cases, an increase of ten per cent. were given, the compensation to some would be more than six times greater than to others.

More than seventy offices distribute packages after ten o'clock at night, and before five in the morning. Postmasters who discharge this duty, are entitled to consideration, not only on account of the labor which they perform, but the unseasonable hours in which they are required to perform it. But, in these cases, an additional per cent. on the moneys received, would not do equal justice, as the disproportion of compensation, for similar services, would be as great as above stated.

A specific sum, given to each Postmaster for this service, would not compensate in proportion to the labor performed, as the labor at some offices is ten times greater than at others.

If the means of the department would authorize the measure, an increase of pay, to Postmasters who separate packages, and to some others, would be neither unjust nor impolitic; but, at present, it seems to be necessary to confine any provision for an increase, within very narrow limits.

On a full consideration of the subject, it is believed, that a special provision, in each case, where an increase of pay shall be deemed indispensable, can be made with more justice to the Postmaster, and less injury to the revenue of the department, than any other mode which can be adopted.

Which is respectfully submitted,

JOHN M'LEAN.

Hon. HENRY CLAY,

Speaker House of Representatives.

